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## ARISTOTLE'S POETICS AND CERTAIN AMERICAN LITERARY CRITICS

(Continued from page 85)

### III

#### JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL AND ARISTOTLE'S POETICS

James Russell Lowell, who in many ways differed widely from Poe, was a capable Greek scholar and an industrious student of the Greek tragedies, all of which he seems to have read and studied in Greek. With such a training, he could hardly have failed to be versed in Aristotle's Poetics. Saintsbury<sup>38</sup> credits him with most of the attributes of the good critic, catholic and observant reading, real enthusiasm for literature, sanity of judgment, good humor, width of view, and methodic arrangement and grasp. The first place in honor Lowell gave to the writers of classic Greece and Rome and to the writers of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, in particular to Dante and Chaucer. In the sphere of art, as Mr. Foerster points out<sup>39</sup>, Lowell almost constantly recognized the supremacy of the Greeks. He often refers with commendation to the critical laws discovered and formulated by the Greeks; but, though he shows acquaintance with Plato and the author of the treatise 'On the Sublime'<sup>40</sup>, most of his knowledge of the classical criticism is drawn ultimately from Aristotle among the Greeks and from Horace among the Romans.

For Lowell, as for Aristotle, the basic principle in criticism is the fact that all art is an imitation of something<sup>41</sup>. Lowell grasped this principle of *mimesis* as it was meant by Aristotle. The great Greek critic, Professor Cooper maintains<sup>42</sup>, meant by *mimesis* the activity of the artistic imagination in its attempt to embody its ideal conceptions in a medium that men can grasp. It was upon this function of the artistic imagination rather than upon the phase of imitation itself that Lowell laid hold, but his remarks are clearly amplifications of the principles formulated by Aristotle. First, Lowell distinguishes the fancy and the imagination. Fancy, he says, is erratic, whereas imagination is controlled and concentrated<sup>43</sup>. Imagination is, consequently, the shaping faculty<sup>44</sup>, the prime requisite of the poet<sup>45</sup>, and the highest criterion of the true poet<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>38</sup>George Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism*, 3, 636 (3 volumes. New York, Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1906).

<sup>39</sup>American Literary Criticism, 126 (see note 35, above). On pages 123-130 Mr. Foerster gives much valuable information about Lowell's Debt to Aristotle.

<sup>40</sup>A discussion of this treatise, by Professor Elizabeth Nitchie, will be published in the current volume of THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY. C. K. >

<sup>41</sup>Cooper, Aristotle on the Art of Poetry, xxv (see note 6, above).

<sup>42</sup>Beaumont and Fletcher, 8.281. In the following notes references to Lowell's writings are made by the title of his work, followed by the volume and the page of the work entitled The Works of Lowell (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1904. 16 volumes).

<sup>43</sup>Webster, 8.229. <sup>44</sup>Library of Old Authors, 2.310.

<sup>45</sup>Carlyle, 2.54.

Secondly, Lowell differentiates imagination and understanding. These he declares to be the two springs of human action<sup>46</sup>. The best English poetry is understanding aerated by imagination<sup>47</sup>. Imaginative power determines originality<sup>48</sup>. The higher drama should represent life above the level of bread-and-butter associations<sup>49</sup>. Imagination overthrows the tyranny of the commonplace<sup>50</sup>, which acts like a drought upon the springs of poesy<sup>51</sup>. The poet, his understanding aerated by his imagination, looks beyond the little smokes and stirs of men<sup>52</sup>; he speaks to the age out of eternity<sup>53</sup>; he furnishes us a standard of more ideal felicity, of calmer pleasures, and more majestic pains<sup>54</sup>. To the truly sane, i. e. to the poetic, it is doubtful whether the world of spirit or the world of sense is the more real<sup>55</sup>. Aristotle, with his insistence upon the primary position of plot<sup>56</sup>, and his assertion that a poet is to be judged first and foremost by his ability as a maker of plots<sup>57</sup>, made imagination the shaping faculty. His statement<sup>58</sup> that tragedy represents men as better than they are is reproduced in Lowell's remarks about the reality of the world of spirit<sup>59</sup>. One who has read Lowell's works in the light of the Poetics readily sees that Lowell's beliefs are largely an amplification of the principles formulated by Aristotle. To be sure, he found part at least of this amplification ready to hand in English and German criticism; but ultimately it was Aristotelian, and Lowell, I think, traced it to its source.

Let us now take up in detail further instances of Lowell's indebtedness to Aristotle. It will be noted that many of the passages quoted below either are assigned by me to Aristotle as the authority for them, or else contain obvious reminiscences of the Poetics.

The shaping imagination which is efficient in producing the artistic imitation constructs the plot or the action of a poem. In the following words Lowell<sup>60</sup> echoes Aristotle's statement about the primary objects of artistic imitation:

<sup>46</sup>Don Quixote, 7.156. <sup>47</sup>Dryden, 3.30-31.

<sup>48</sup>Chaucer, 2.194.

<sup>49</sup>Shakespeare Once More, 3.313.

<sup>50</sup>Spenser, 4.320; Massinger and Ford, 8.307. <sup>51</sup>Gray, 8.10.

<sup>52</sup>The Voyage to Vinland II. 16-18, 12.226.

<sup>53</sup>Columbus 192-195, 9.161. <sup>54</sup>Massinger and Ford, 8.313.

<sup>55</sup>Agassiz III. 2.207-208, 13.118.

<sup>56</sup>Poetics 6.19. See note 19, above.

<sup>57</sup>Poetics 9.9 Δῆλον . . . πρᾶξις . . . "From all this it is evident that the Poet [the Greek word signifies 'Maker'] is a maker of plots more than a maker of verses, inasmuch as he is a poet by virtue of imitating some object, and the objects he imitates are actions. . . . "It is evident from the above that the poet must be more the poet of his stories or Plots than of his verses, inasmuch as he is a poet by virtue of the imitative element in his work, and it is actions that he imitates. . . ."

<sup>58</sup>Poetics 2.7 . . . ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ διαφορᾷ . . . τῶν νῦν. "Now, so far as the objects of the imitation are concerned, the nobility of the agents is what distinguishes Tragedy from Comedy. Comedy tends to represent the agents as worse, and Tragedy as better than the men of the present day. . . . This difference it is that distinguishes Tragedy and Comedy also; the one would make its personages worse, and the other better, than the men of the present day".

<sup>59</sup>See notes 13, 55, above.

<sup>60</sup>The Old English Dramatists, 8.195; see note 13, above.

...Thoroughly to understand a good play and enjoy it even in the reading, the imagination must body forth the personages, and see them doing or suffering in the visionary theatre of the brain....

Shortly before writing this passage, in the same essay Lowell expressed, in his definition of the dramatic, his conception of artistic imitation. In that definition<sup>61</sup>, too, he seems to be recalling the words of Aristotle which he borrowed in the passage last quoted:

...What is that which we call dramatic? In the abstract, it is thought or emotion in action or on its way to become action. In the concrete, it is that which is more vivid if represented than described, and which would lose if merely narrated....

Again, in discussing Shakespeare, Lowell says<sup>62</sup>:

...The scope of the higher drama is to represent life, not every-day life, it is true, but life lifted above the plane of bread-and-butter associations....

It has been mentioned that Aristotle sees in the poet primarily the maker of plots<sup>63</sup>. It is interesting to note that Lowell finds Lessing, an ardent Aristotelian, in his *Minna von Barnhelm* and in his *Emilia Galotti* a master of construction rather than a portrayeur of character<sup>64</sup>.

Lowell follows Aristotle also in his preference of the unified plot to a plot that is episodic. In the following words he shows clearly what he expects in a good play<sup>65</sup>:

...In a play we not only expect a succession of scenes, but that each scene should lead, by a logic more or less stringent, if not to the next, at any rate to something that is to follow, and that all should contribute their fraction of impulse towards the inevitable catastrophe. That is to say, the structure should be organic, with a necessary and harmonious connection and relation of parts, and not merely mechanical, with an arbitrary or haphazard joining of one part to another....

This, according to Professor Butcher<sup>66</sup>, who quotes the same passage, is a summary of Aristotle's conception of the unity essential to the drama, a summary, he adds, that could not be much better done. Lowell's criticism of Shakespeare repeats the statement quoted above<sup>67</sup>:

...As he matured, his plays became more and more organisms, and less and less mere successions of juxtaposed scenes, strung together on the thread of the plot....

Another remarkably clear expression of Aristotle's conception occurs in Lowell's discussion of Marlowe's plays<sup>68</sup>:

...But there is no controlling reason in the piece <The Jew of Malta>. Nothing happens because it must, but because the author wills it so....

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* also he condemns because it is "a mere aggregation of episodes"<sup>69</sup>. The following words of Aristotle are obviously the basis of Lowell's statements<sup>70</sup>:

<sup>61</sup>The Old English Dramatists, 8.193-194.

<sup>62</sup>Shakespeare Once More, 3.313.

<sup>63</sup>Poetics 9.9; see note 57, above.

<sup>64</sup>Lessing, 4.161-162. <sup>65</sup>Webster, 8.228.

<sup>66</sup>S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*<sup>1</sup>, 285 (see note 28, above, at the end).

<sup>67</sup>Shakespeare's *Richard III*, 7.286.

<sup>68</sup>Marlowe, 8.219; compare 8.210-211.

<sup>69</sup>Lessing, 4.97.

<sup>70</sup>Poetics 8.4... *χρὴ οὖν... δλον ἐστίν*. This Bywater renders as follows: "...The truth is that, just as in the other imitative arts one imitation is always of one thing, so in poetry the story, as an im-

...as in the other imitative arts, painting and the rest, so in poetry, the object of the imitation in each case is a unit; therefore in an epic or a tragedy, the plot, which is an imitation of an action, must represent an action that is organically unified, the structural order of the incidents being such that transposing or removing any one of them will dislocate and disorganize the whole. Every part must be necessary, and in its place; for a thing whose presence or absence makes no perceptible difference is not an organic part of the whole.

A little farther on Aristotle adds<sup>71</sup>:

Plots and actions...are either Involved or Uninvolved. Of the uninvolved, the purely episodic plots are the worst, a plot being called 'episodic' when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of incident....

Lowell and Aristotle are again at one in their conception of the purpose of tragedy. Both adhere to the doctrine of its cathartic effect. Aristotle, in the course of his definition of tragedy<sup>72</sup>, says that the function of tragedy is to arouse in the audience, or reader, the emotions of pity and fear, and to arouse them in such a way as to relieve or purge off these emotions. Lowell follows him in his denunciation of contemporary poetry<sup>73</sup>:

...An overmastering passion no longer entangles the spiritual being of its victim in the burning toils of a retribution foredoomed in its own nature, purifying us with the terror and pity of a soul in its extremity, as the great masters were wont to set it before us....

He remarks that Lamb found in the death-scene of Marlowe's *Edward II* the capacity to move pity and terror beyond any other scene with which Lamb was acquainted<sup>74</sup>. He believes that Fletcher was more at home with the pity of a scene of his composition than with the terror of it<sup>75</sup>. Lowell is also acquainted with Aristotle's differentiation of the horrible from the terrible. Aristotle says that dramatists who attempt to produce what is merely monstrous without being terrible are utter strangers to the art of tragedy<sup>76</sup>, that the spectacle of good and just men falling from happiness to misery is revolting, because, as in the previous

imitation of action, must represent one action, a complete whole, with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole. For that which makes no perceptible difference by its presence or absence is no real part of the whole".

<sup>71</sup>Poetics 9.11 *τῶν δὲ ἀπλῶν μύθων... ἀνάγκη εἶναι*, "Of simple Plots and actions the episodic are the worst. I call a Plot episodic when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of its episodes...."

<sup>72</sup>Poetics 6.2... *ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία... καθάρσις*.... "A Tragedy, then, is an artistic imitation of an action that is serious, complete in itself, and of an adequate magnitude.... And as for the proper function resulting from the imitation of such an object in such a medium and manner, it is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear in the audience; and to arouse this pity and fear in such a way as to effect that special purging off and relief (*catharsis*) of these two emotions which is the characteristic of Tragedy...."; "...A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions...."

<sup>73</sup>Swinburne's *Tragedies*, 2.160.

<sup>74</sup>Marlowe, 8.211.

<sup>75</sup>Beaumont and Fletcher, 8.283-284.

<sup>76</sup>Poetics 14.4... *οἱ δὲ μὴ τὸ φοβερόν... οἰκεῖαν*, "...But those who employ the means of the stage to produce what strikes us as being merely monstrous, without being terrible, are absolute strangers to the art of Tragedy; for not every kind of pleasure is to be sought from a tragedy, but only that specific pleasure which is characteristic of this art"; "...Those, however, who make use of the Spectacle to put before us that which is merely monstrous and not productive of fear, are wholly out of touch with Tragedy; not every kind of pleasure should be required of a tragedy, but only its own proper pleasure".

instance, such a situation fails to arouse the specific feelings of pity and fear<sup>77</sup>, and that the least tragic situation possible is that in which a man, aware that he is about to do a blood-relation a deadly injury, does not do it, for such a situation, while it arouses the feeling of terror, does not arouse the emotion of pity<sup>78</sup>. Of the dramatist Webster Lowell says<sup>79</sup>:

... Webster had, no doubt, the primal requisite of a poet, imagination, but in him it was truly untamed, and Aristotle's admirable distinction between the horrible and the terrible in tragedy was never better illustrated than in the "Duchess" and "Vittoria"....

Two other plays by Webster are, Lowell thinks, good, because, though they are full of horrors, they nevertheless fulfil the function of tragedy by strongly moving pity and terror<sup>80</sup>. Of a speech by Barabas, the Jew of Malta in Marlowe's famous play, Lowell says<sup>81</sup>, "... This is the mere lunacy of distempered imagination. It is shocking, and not terrible..."

Lowell knows Aristotle's requirement that the drama shall have beginning, middle, and end<sup>82</sup>.

... Ben Jonson was perfectly familiar with the traditional principles of construction. He tells us that the fable of a drama (by which he means the plot or action) should have a beginning, a middle, and an end; and that "as a body without proportion cannot be goodly, no more can an action, either in comedy or tragedy, without fit bounds..."

Although Lowell is here quoting Jonson, his opening sentence shows his awareness of Jonson's source<sup>83a</sup>. Jonson in this remark gives the gist of chapter seven of the Poetics. We find Lowell referring to chapters six and eight of the Poetics; it is hardly to be supposed that he failed to note the chapter which comes between the two to which he refers.

Lowell is quite in harmony with Aristotle's directions for the proper construction of the plot. Lowell, of course, would not have had writers choose their themes from a select body of legends, even though Aristotle states<sup>83</sup> that that is what the successful Greek writers of

tragedy had done. But Aristotle obviously merely mentions a *characteristic* of the successful dramas, without making it a *requirement*. Both Aristotle and Lowell feel that the author who finds his theme or plot ready-made is more likely to succeed than he who tries to invent a plot. Shakespeare, Lowell remarks<sup>84</sup>, generally preferred to take a plot ready to his hand, though he was successful also when he resorted, as in *The Tempest*, to invention; but Webster, Lowell finds, as a playwright inferior to Shakespeare almost always got into trouble when he started to invent his plot<sup>85</sup>. Aristotle's further hint to composers to envisage the entire plot, to make an outline before they attempt to compose anything<sup>86</sup>, meets Lowell's approval. He declares that Shakespeare must have seen the end of each of his plays from the beginning<sup>87</sup>, and he shows the need for such an outline when he says<sup>88</sup>,

... In the highest examples we have, the master is revealed by his plan, by his power of making all accessories, each in its true relation, subordinate to it....

The selection of materials is indeed no easy task. Aristotle warns the dramatist to bear in mind that he is not composing an epic<sup>89</sup>. The following passage<sup>90</sup>, selected from Lowell's many statements on this subject, shows his ideas on the matter:

... The really great writer is great in the mass, and is to be tested less by his cleverness in the elaboration of parts than by that reach of mind which is incapable of random effort, which selects, arranges, combines, rejects, denies itself the cheap triumph of immediate effects, because it is absorbed by the controlling charm of proportion and unity....

Finally, in connection with plot, comes the question of the employment in the drama of improbabilities or anachronisms. Aristotle insists upon a natural sequence of events rather than a mechanical sequence<sup>91</sup>.

agents or sufferers, in some deed of horror.... Compare Poetics 14.10-11 *Τοὺς μὲν οὖν παρειλημμένους... χρῆσθαι καλῶς*.... "The general framework of these stories, then, the poet must not disturb: Clytemnestra must be slain by her son Orestes, and Eriphyle by her son Alcmeon. At the same time, the poet must select for himself from the materials of tradition, and he must employ the given materials with skill"; "... The traditional stories, accordingly, must be kept as they are, e.g. the murder of Clytemnestra by Orestes and of Eriphyle by Alcmeon. At the same time even with these there is something left to the poet himself; it is for him to devise the right way of treating them...."

<sup>77</sup>Webster, 8.232-233. <sup>78</sup>Webster, 8.233. <sup>79</sup>See note 23, above.

<sup>80</sup>Webster, 8.232. <sup>81</sup>Shakespeare Once More, 3.253.

<sup>82</sup>Poetics 17.9 *Ἐν μὲν οὖν... μῆκενται*, "... The episodes must also be of an appropriate length. In dramas, they are short; in the epic, it is they that serve to extend the poem...."; "... In plays, then, the episodes are short; in epic poetry they serve to lengthen out the poem...."

<sup>83</sup>Chaucer, 2.229-230. Compare Milton, 5.245-253; A Fable for Critics, 12.870-873.

<sup>84</sup>Poetics 15.10-10b *Χρή δὲ... ἀπόπλουν*, "As in combining the incidents of the plot, so also in representing the character of the agents, the poet must seek after a necessary or probable relation between one thing and another. That is, a certain kind of person must speak or act in a certain fashion as the necessary or probable outcome of his inward nature; and thus one thing will follow another in a necessary or probable sequence.—From this it is clear that the solution of dramatic situations should come to pass from the progress of the story itself; it should not be brought about by a mechanical device (like the *Deus ex Machina*), as when Euripides' *Medea* is concluded by the escape of the heroine in an aerial chariot drawn by dragons, or as in the *Iliad*, Book 2, where the Greeks are withheld from a premature homeward voyage through the intervention of the goddess...."; "... The right thing, however, is in the Characters just as in the incidents of the play to endeavour always after the necessary or the probable; so that whenever such-and-such a personage says or does such-and-such a thing, it shall be the probable or necessary outcome of his character; and whenever this incident follows on that, it shall be either the necessary or the probable consequence of it. From this one sees (to digress for a moment) that the *Dénouement* also should arise out of the plot itself, and not depend on a stage-artifice, as in *Medea*, or in the story of the (arrested) departure of the Greeks in the *Iliad*...."

<sup>77</sup>Poetics 13.2... *πρῶτον μὲν... μαρόν ἐστιν*.... "... When we take this function as a standard, it is clear that there are three forms of plot to be avoided. (1) Good and just men are not to be represented as falling from happiness into misery; for such a spectacle does not arouse fear or pity in us—it is simply revolting...."; "... It follows, therefore, that there are three forms of Plot to be avoided. (1) A good man must not be seen passing from happiness to misery, or (2) a bad man from misery to happiness. The first situation is not fear-inspiring or piteous, but simply odious to us...."

<sup>78</sup>Poetics 14.16 *τούτων δὲ... ἀπαθὲς γάρ*.... "Of all the possibilities, the worst is the situation in which some one, aware of the relationship, is about to do another a deadly injury, and does not do it. The situation is revolting to our sense of natural affection; and it is not tragic—pity is not aroused—because the intended victim does not suffer...."; "The worst situation is when the personage is with full knowledge on the point of doing the deed, and leaves it undone. It is odious and also (through the absence of suffering) untragic...."

<sup>79</sup>Library of Old Authors, 2.310.

<sup>80</sup>Webster, 8.246. <sup>81</sup>Marlowe, 8.218.

<sup>82</sup>Poetics 7.3... *ὅλον δὲ ἐστὶν... τελευτῆν*.... "Now a Whole is that which has (1) a Beginning, (2) a Middle, and (3) an End...."; "... Now a whole is that which has beginning, middle, and end...."; Webster, 8.231.

<sup>83a</sup>Jonson's quotation is from Poetics 7.8-9, but he paraphrases rather than translates.

<sup>84</sup>Poetics 13.7... *πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ... ποιῆσαι*.... "In the early days the tragic poets were satisfied with any stories that came in their way; but now the practice has narrowed down to traditions concerning a few houses, and the best tragedies are founded on the legends of Alcmeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and similar personages who have been either the movers or the victims in some signal overthrow of fortune...."; "... Though the poets began by accepting any tragic story that came to hand, in these days the finest tragedies are always on the story of some few houses, on that of Alcmeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, or any others that may have been involved, as either



To this Lowell assents<sup>92</sup>:

... They <the old English dramatists> seem perfectly content if they have a story which they can divide at proper intervals by acts and scenes, and bring at last to a satisfactory end, by marriage or murder, as the case may be. A certain variety of characters is necessary, but the motives that compel and control them are almost never sufficiently apparent. ... The personages are brought in to do certain things and perform certain purposes of the author, but too often there seems to be no special reason why one of them should do this or that more than another. ...

Aristotle says that the supernatural or the irrational, if unavoidable, must be outside the tragedy proper<sup>93</sup>, that a sequence of events which, though actually impossible, seems reasonable, is preferable in a drama to a sequence which appears incredible, though actually true<sup>94</sup>; but the poet should not employ the irrational or the improbable carelessly, or when they can be avoided<sup>95</sup>. Aristotle quotes the tragic poet Agathon as saying that it is not improbable that something improbable may sometimes occur<sup>96</sup>; it is obvious, however, that Aristotle prefers the rational. Lowell, too, asserts<sup>97</sup> that "... if possible, the understanding should have as few difficulties put in its way as possible. ..." He condemns<sup>98</sup> anachronisms that "violate not only the accidental truth of fact, but the essential truth of character. ..." Of the old English dramatists he remarks<sup>99</sup> with some amusement that "those old poets had a very lordly contempt for probability when improbability would serve their turn better". An even more explicit statement of his agreement with Aristotle is the following passage<sup>100</sup>:

... If this play <Romeo and Juliet, which he greatly admired> were meant to illustrate anything, it would seem to be that our lives were ruled by chance. Yet there is nothing left to chance in the action of the play, which advances with the unvacillating foot of destiny. ...

<sup>92</sup>Webster, 8.230.

<sup>93</sup>Poetics 15.100-10d ... ἀλλὰ μηχανῇ ... τῷ Σοφοκλέους, "... These arbitrary devices must be reserved for matters lying outside of the drama proper, to explain such occurrences in the past as are beyond the range of human knowledge (for example, in a prologue by a god), or such events in the future as need to be foretold and announced;—for we credit the gods with seeing all things, both past and future. In the events of the drama itself there should be nothing that does not square with our reason; but if an irrational element cannot be avoided, it must lie outside of the tragedy proper, as in the case of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. ... The artifice must be reserved for matters outside the play—for past events beyond human knowledge, or events yet to come, which require to be foretold or announced; since it is the privilege of the Gods to know everything. There should be nothing improbable among the actual incidents. If it be unavoidable, however, it should be outside the tragedy, like the improbability in the *Oedipus* of Sophocles. ...

<sup>94</sup>Poetics 24.19 Προαιρεῖσθαι ... ἀπιθῆναι. ... "A sequence of events which, though actually impossible, looks reasonable should be preferred by the poet to what, though really possible, seems incredible. ... "A likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility. ...

<sup>95</sup>Poetics 24.20 ... τοὺς τε λόγους ... ἀλλὰ μὴ ἐν τῷ δράματι. ... "The story [whether of an epic or a tragedy] should not be made up of incidents which are severally improbable; one should rather aim to include no irrational element whatsoever. At any rate, if an irrational element is unavoidable, it should lie outside of the story proper—as the hero's ignorance in *Oedipus the King* of the way in which Laius met his death. ... The story should never be made up of improbable incidents; there should be nothing of the sort in it. If, however, such incidents are unavoidable, they should be outside the piece, like the hero's ignorance in *Oedipus* of the circumstances of Laius' death; not within it. ...

<sup>96</sup>Poetics 18.18 ... ὥσπερ Ἀγάθων λέγει ... παρὰ τὸ εἶκος, ... The outcome is probable only in Agathon's sense: it is likely, he says, that many unlikely things will occur. ... This is probable, however, only in Agathon's sense, when he speaks of the probability of even improbabilities coming to pass. ...

<sup>97</sup>Webster, 8.233.

<sup>98</sup>Lessing, 4.163.

<sup>99</sup>Massinger and Ford, 8.308. <sup>100</sup>Webster, 8.232.

Aristotle's influence again appears clearly in Lowell's ideas about the characters of the drama. First, says Lowell, the characters are to be subordinated to the plot, for, as we have seen, Aristotle insists that primarily the poet is a maker of plots. Lowell notes that Lessing, student of the Poetics, contrives in his dramas to interest us in his story rather than in his characters<sup>101</sup>. The characters of *Romeo and Juliet* subordinate themselves to the interests of the play<sup>102</sup>. Webster has a weakness in failing to see that true dramatic art makes all the characters foils to one another and tributaries to the final catastrophe<sup>103</sup>. Secondly, Aristotle mentions four requirements to be met in the portrayal of character: the characters must be good, true to life, true to type, and self-consistent<sup>104</sup>. Lowell, too, believes<sup>105</sup> that the agents of the highest drama should be "men whom we might see if we were lucky enough". One of his numerous strictures upon Webster is that his characters are not true to type<sup>106</sup>:

... The poet shows one of his habitual weaknesses. ... in being so far tempted by the chance of saying a pretty thing as to make somebody say it who naturally would not. There is really a worse waste than had it been thrown away. ...

Goethe<sup>107</sup> and Marlowe<sup>108</sup> also he condemns for making their personages mere puppets: Goethe's characters, he says, express the author's thoughts, not their own, while Marlowe's characters are mere interlocutors. It is, however, principally of the consistency in portrayal of a character that Lowell has something to say. The unlucky Webster is once more the butt of his remarks<sup>109</sup>:

... He had no conception of nature in its large sense, as something pervading a whole character and making it consistent with itself. ...

Elsewhere he remarks<sup>110</sup>:

... The first demand we make upon whatever claims to be a work of art (and we have a right to make it) is that it shall be *in keeping*. ... Subordinate truth to nature, which makes each character coherent in itself. ...

Lowell, having read the Greek tragedies, knows<sup>111</sup> that "the personages of the Greek tragedy seem to be types rather than individuals", a statement which is quite in harmony with Aristotle's remarks in differentiating poetry from history. Having said that poetry represents what is universal or typical, Aristotle goes on to explain, thus<sup>112</sup>:

... By an exhibition of what is universal or typical is meant the representation of what a certain type of person is likely or is bound to say or do in a given

<sup>101</sup>Lessing, 4.162.

<sup>102</sup>Webster, 8.232.

<sup>103</sup>Library of Old Authors, 2.310.

<sup>104</sup>Poetics 15.1-6.

<sup>105</sup>Fielding, 7.64.

<sup>106</sup>Webster, 8.238.

<sup>107</sup>The Old English Dramatists, 8.194.

<sup>108</sup>The Old English Dramatists, 8.217.

<sup>109</sup>Library of Old Authors, 2.310.

<sup>110</sup>Shakespeare Once More, 3.292-293.

<sup>111</sup>Shakespeare Once More, 3.279.

<sup>112</sup>Poetics 9.4 Ἔστιν δὲ καθόλου ... τί ἐπαθεν. ... "By an exhibition of what is universal or typical is meant the representation of what a certain type of person is likely or is bound to say or do in a given situation. This is the aim of the Poet, though at the same time he attaches the names of specific persons to the types. As distinguished from the universal, the particular, which is the subject matter of history, consists of what an actual person, Alcibiades or the like, actually did or underwent. ... By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do—which is the aim of poetry, though it affixes proper names to the characters; by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him. ...

situation. This is the aim of the poet, though at the same time he attaches the names of specific persons to the types. . . .

Lowell finds Fielding to be lacking in this ability of the poet<sup>112</sup>:

... Certainly Fielding's genius was incapable of that ecstasy of conception through which the poetic imagination is fused into a molten unity with its material, and produces figures that are typical without loss of characteristic individuality, as if they were drawn, not from what we call real life, but from the very source of life itself, and were cast in that universal mould about which the subtlest thinkers that have ever lived so long busied themselves. Fielding's characters are very real persons; but they are not types in the same sense as Lear and Hamlet. They seem to be men whom we have seen rather than men whom we might see if we were lucky enough, men who have been rather than who might have been. . . .

Lowell considers Massinger a true poet in one respect, that his conceptions of character were ideal<sup>114</sup>. Lowell knows also Aristotle's definition of the ideal tragic hero as one who, though he is good in the main, has a weakness which ultimately accomplishes his downfall<sup>115</sup>. Lowell regrets<sup>116</sup> that the modern drama shows that an overmastering passion no longer entangles the spiritual being of its victim in the burning toils of a retribution foredoomed in its own nature, as the great masters were wont to show us. . . .

Aristotle's famous distinction between poetry and history<sup>117</sup> wins enthusiastic support from Lowell. Truth, the latter says, is not the same as exactitude<sup>118</sup>. Knowledge is inferior to conjecture<sup>119</sup>. Fact suffocates the muse, truth is the breath of her nostrils<sup>120</sup>. The true ideal lies in the real<sup>121</sup>, but the real must rest on the ideal<sup>122</sup>. The world of the poet Spenser is ideal<sup>123</sup>, but is not a world of unreality<sup>124</sup>. The artist aims at psychology (i. e. philosophical) truth, rather than at historical truth<sup>125</sup>. This last statement is nearly an echo of Aristotle's declaration that poetry is something more philosophical than history. In fine, Lowell's attitude is expressed in the following words<sup>126</sup>:

... The proof of poetry is, in my mind, that it reduce to the essence of a single line the vague philosophy which is floating in all men's minds, and so render it portable and useful, and ready to the hand. . . .

Lowell seems to know something of Aristotle's separation of the two types of poet, the plastic and the enthusiastic. Aristotle in a few words describes the

two types<sup>127</sup>:

... the art of poetry requires either a certain natural plasticity in the poet, or else a touch of madness. Poets of the first sort readily assume one personality after another; those of the second involuntarily pass into various states of emotional excitement. . . .

Lowell himself belonged to the enthusiastic type of poet<sup>128</sup>, and seems in many respects to have preferred this type to the former, although, on the ground of his plasticity as well as on other grounds, he yields the palm to Shakespeare. But he objects<sup>129</sup> to the lack in Fielding of an "ecstasy of conception", which is characteristic of the poetic imagination, and he sees<sup>130</sup> as one of the characteristics of the poet some subtler touch of sympathy by which

These primal apprehensions, dimly stirred  
Perplex the eye with pictures from within.  
This hath made poets dream of lives foregone  
In worlds fantastical, more fair than ours.

In discussing originality, Lowell adds the following concerning the plastic type of poet<sup>131</sup>:

... Originality does not consist in a fidgety assertion of selfhood, but in the faculty of getting rid of it altogether, that the truer genius of the man, which commences with universal nature and with other souls through a common sympathy with that, may take all his powers wholly to himself. . . .

He notes also that a poet may be sometimes plastic, at other times enthusiastic; Dante is such a poet<sup>132</sup>. Milton he believes to be always plastic<sup>133</sup>.

The passages quoted above and the comments made upon them amply prove Lowell's deep interest in Aristotelian criticism, and are in many cases indicative of the possession by him of first-hand information concerning the Poetics. It is not too much to say that Lowell's important position in American letters and criticism is based largely upon his knowledge of the principles advocated by Aristotle in the Poetics, and his adherence to them.

(To be concluded)

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## REVIEWS

A History of Olynthus, With a Prosopographia and Testimonia. By Mabel Gude. The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Archaeology No. 17, Edited by David M. Robinson. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press (1933). Pp. xii + 110. \$2.50<sup>1</sup>.

The slender volume entitled A History of Olynthus. . . . has appeared in logical sequence to the important series of works<sup>2</sup> that has been published of

<sup>112</sup>Fielding, 7.64. <sup>113</sup>Massinger and Ford, 8.309-310.  
<sup>114</sup>Poetics 13.5 "Ὁ μεταξὺ . . . ἀνδρες. . . . There remains, then, (4) the case of the man intermediate between these extremes: a not superlatively good and just, nor yet one whose misfortune comes about through vice and depravity; but a man who is brought low through some error of judgment or shortcoming, one from the number of the highly renowned and prosperous—such a person as Oedipus of the line of Thebes, Thyestes of Pelops' line, and the eminent men of other noted families. . . . There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement, of the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity; e. g. Oedipus, Thyestes, and the men of note of similar families. . . . See the illuminating discussion in Cooper, Aristotle on the Art of Poetry, 40-42 (see note 6, above).  
<sup>115</sup>Swineburne's Tragedies, 2.160. <sup>116</sup>Poetics 9.1-10.  
<sup>117</sup>Fielding, 7.71.  
<sup>118</sup>A Familiar Epistle to a Friend 79-82, 12.279.  
<sup>119</sup>Wordsworth, 5.208.  
<sup>120</sup>Shakespeare Once More, 3.288. <sup>121</sup>Democracy, 7.19.  
<sup>122</sup>Spenser, 4.301-302. <sup>123</sup>Spenser, 4.306-307.  
<sup>124</sup>Shakespeare Once More, 3.294. Compare 3.313-314.  
<sup>125</sup>Letter to C. F. Briggs, August 9, 1843, 14.111.

<sup>127</sup>Poetics 17.4 . . . διὰ εὐφροσύνης . . . εἰσιν. " . . . Hence it is that poetry demands a man with a special gift for it, or else one with a touch of madness in him; the former can easily assume the required mood, and the latter may be actually beside himself with emotion. . . .  
<sup>128</sup>H. E. Scudder, James Russell Lowell, 1.119, 137.  
<sup>129</sup>Fielding, 7.64. <sup>130</sup>The Cathedral 49-53, 13.44.  
<sup>131</sup>Rousseau, 4.203-204. Compare Lowell's letter to G. B. Loring, April 5, 1837, 14.19.  
<sup>132</sup>Dante, 5.132. <sup>133</sup>Milton, 5.311.

<sup>2</sup>Part of this monograph was presented as a dissertation. The work in its present form is quite different from the dissertation.  
<sup>3</sup>The reference here is to the work entitled Excavations at Olynthus, of which seven parts have been published (The Johns Hopkins Press). Part I is by Professor George E. Mylonas, the other parts by Professor David M. Robinson. The titles of the Parts are as follows: I, The Neolithic Settlement (1929), II, Archi-

recent years to describe the excavations conducted in 1928 and 1931 on and near the site of Myriophyto in the Chalcidic Peninsula, which is confidently believed<sup>1</sup> to be the site of the ancient Olynthus.

The Greek historians have left us but meager information concerning this notable Macedonian city. Dr. Gude has collected all this information within the narrow compass of 38 pages (1-38). Her style presents in a marked degree the qualities of terseness, vigor, and maturity, and at times approaches the epigrammatic. As a result, however, of this extreme verbal economy an occasional paragraph makes difficult reading and borders on obscurity.

The historical facts relating to Olynthus are admirably marshalled. The name of the city is presumably pre-Greek. We do not actually encounter the name till 479 B. C., when the retreating Persians captured the town from the Bottiaeans and turned it over to the Chalcidians. A 'Synoecismos' of Chalcidic towns occurred in 432 B. C., which presently developed into a 'League' whose constitution is as yet almost unknown. Olynthus was destroyed by Philip II in 348 B. C., yet the names of individuals who are called Olynthians persist sporadically down to about the time of Christ, despite the fact that there is no direct evidence to show that the site was ever resettled. One may adduce here the analogy of the Italic Sybarites, though their name seems to disappear within seventy years of the date of the destruction of their city.

In one important historical connection Dr. Gude offers an hypothesis which is at the same time new and old—one that is sure to cause much controversy. Freeman and Greenidge and members in general of the older school of ancient historians dated the genesis of the Chalcidic League in 382 B. C. More recently, the date was set back a decade. Within the last twenty years accumulating numismatic evidence has convinced most scholars that the League began to operate about 430-420 B. C. Dr. Gude reverts (18-23) to the old-fashioned dating<sup>2</sup>, basing her conclusion in part on the silence of Thucydides and Demosthenes, but chiefly on the apparent novelty of the political situation that developed in Chalcidice in 382 B. C. as portrayed in the speech of the Acanthian envoy which is outlined in Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.2.11-19. She finds no real difficulty in the numismatical situation, since she explains the presence of the inscription 'Chalkideon' which occurs regularly on Olynthian coins from 425

B. C. onward as indicative of the synoecism of 432 B. C. In this view the coin-type is reminiscent merely of the Chalcidian residents at Olynthus.

It would require much space to discuss the matter in detail. Undoubtedly the weakest link in Dr. Gude's chain of argument is a numismatic phenomenon which she does not notice. If a League came into existence in Chalcidice in 382 B. C., we should expect—as happens under similar circumstances elsewhere—to find a radical alteration in the coin-type. But there is none. The coinage bearing the head of Apollo on the obverse, the lyre or the tripod on the reverse, and accompanied by the inscription which has been noted above, enjoys an undisturbed course—varied only by normal stylistic changes—from 425 B. C. to the end of Olynthian history. On the other hand, we cannot deny the possibility that, amid the thick darkness that involves Chalcidic politics in general, a series of very gradual coalescences was occurring in the half century following 432 B. C., and that the original synoecism of that date developed, by steps too insignificant to demand numismatic recognition, into one of the many forms of 'sympoliteia' known to the Greeks. We know that the name 'koinon' was officially applied to the political complex of the Chalcidians earlier than 383 B. C. We can only hope that, when excavation is resumed on the site of Myriophyto, epigraphical discoveries may serve to bring light out of darkness: as yet no city-wall, no temple, no inscription has been unearthed by the excavations at Myriophyto.

There is a useful *Prosopographia Olynthia* that records 137 names. These include some twenty soldiers, politicians and men of affairs, artists and authors; the remainder are names, and nothing more. In the fifty pages of *Testimonia* we have full quotations of the sources for Olynthian history.

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A. D. FRASER

Aspects of Social Behavior in Ancient Rome. Martin Classical Lectures, Volume II. By Tenney Frank. Harvard University Press (1932). Pp. xi + 155. \$2.00.

Professor Frank's book, *Aspects of Social Behavior in Ancient Rome*, constitutes the second volume of the Martin Classical Lectures of Oberlin College<sup>1</sup>. While he recognizes (viii) the likelihood that, because of the ravages of time, "we shall probably never have adequate sources for a well-rounded work on Roman sociology", he believes it possible to use what evidence there is to derive a truer conception of Roman social practices than we have yet attained. In these lectures he undertakes to demonstrate his thesis, choosing for discussion not the whole field of Roman social life, but a few separate aspects that seemed to him to be especially deserving of further study. The subjects chosen are all old and familiar, but, as with all his work, Professor Frank approaches them with a combination of learning, originality, and common-sense

<sup>1</sup>For a review, by Professor Jacob Hammer, of Volume One of these lectures see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 27.6-7. C. K. >

ture and Sculpture, Houses and Other Buildings (1930), III, The Coins Found at Olynthus in 1928 (1931), IV, The Terra-Cottas of Olynthus Found in 1928 (1931), V, Mosaics, Vases, and Lamps (1933), VI, The Coins Found at Olynthus in 1931 (1933), VII, The Terra-Cottas Found at Olynthus in 1931 (1933). C. K. >  
<sup>2</sup>In reply to my question Professor Fraser stated that he had intentionally made his statement here a trifle ambiguous. The belief, he added, is quite general, but not universal. C. K. >  
<sup>3</sup>On page ix, under the caption "Editor's Note", Professor Robinson writes as follows: "I am sorry that I cannot agree with Miss Gude about the beginning of the Chalcidic League which I put 423-421 B. C. I cannot follow her distinction between a synoecism and a league. The coins seem to me to show no such difference and the League coins begin about 423 B. C. Cf. *The Coins Found at Olynthus in 1931*, pp. 14-17. The findings of a fifth century hoard of coins, including some of the League (*op. cit.*, p. 14), of fifth century mosaics, of fifth century houses, and of fifth century vases, lamps, bronzes, etc., and the excavations on the North Hill in general seem to me to favor a date about 423 B. C. or even earlier". C. K. >



that gives to old material a challengingly new aspect. Each of the five chapters yields its quota of fruitful suggestions, and the whole discussion is carried forward in a manner and a style that are models of clarity and persuasiveness.

The contents of the book are as follows: Foreword (vii-x); <Table of> Contents (xi); I, The Roman Family (3-34); II, Social Factors in Religious Changes (35-63); III, Farmers or Peasants (64-91); IV, Rome's Experiments in Social Reform (92-117); V, Society and Law in Early Rome (118-139); Notes (140-146); Index (149-155).

In Chapter I Professor Frank discusses the Roman family, with the main intent of squaring theory with practice. Handbooks on Roman private life are often prone, he says, to give an incorrect picture of the family because they rely too heavily (10) "upon a literal interpretation of certain passages of the Roman law books . . .", and so overemphasize the power contained in the *patria potestas*. The truth is, he insists, that the functioning of the family in ancient Rome represented a nice balance between two opposing and seemingly contradictory factors, the legal (juristic) recognition of the *patria potestas*, and the social recognition accorded from early times to the Roman matron. Professor Frank might have called upon the deep strain of conservatism in the Roman character to explain why the Romans never revoked the old statute which recognized the complete control of the *paterfamilias* over his family, a power which seems to have been rarely applied. This patriarchal system, he concludes (13), "is not necessarily a mark of a very primitive stage of culture . . .", as is commonly held; it may arise when a people changes from one state of organized society to another, and so, in the case of the old Romans, was (14) "purely a governmental accident—which probably arose in some period of migration from central Europe—and . . . it has no implications derogatory to any of the other members of the family". In theory the *patria potestas* remained intact. But, meanwhile, as the facts eloquently show, the Roman wife, legally a minor, enjoyed a latitude of freedom, being in this respect quite different from her Greek sister of the classical period. What force was it that so counteracted the natural tendencies implicit in the patriarchal system? Professor Frank finds it (18) "largely in the permanence through many centuries of a dignified and powerful aristocracy . . .", where an urbane familial equality of the sexes obtained, somewhat similar to that existing in the heroic age of Greece. The Roman matron, surely, was always an important person in the life of the family, sharing in many of the family responsibilities and burdens. In the Ciceronian age there are many notable examples of influential and independent women. Divorce was always relatively easy, and, in the days of the late Republic, as moral codes shifted, it was frequent. By Augustus's time the old social restraints had relaxed, polite society was based on equal rights and privileges between the sexes, and thus Ovid could claim (34) that he "did not teach society a lesson, he described what he saw".

Chapter II concerns itself with the Eastern religions that spread through the Roman world under the early Empire. Its main purpose is to uphold, with Toutain against Cumont, Dobschütz, and others, the contention that these new faiths owed their wide dissemination in the West not so much, if at all, to the degree to which they satisfied deep-seated religious needs as to the racial composition of the Roman population under the Empire. For careful investigation of the evidence, especially the inscriptions, tends to show (63) that these Oriental religions "seldom spread beyond the groups of immigrants to whom they were native cults. None of them had the capacity to become a world-religion . . .". In the case of Christianity there were factors which led eventually to a different conclusion.

The aim of the third chapter is to combat another misconception—eloquently expressed, for example, by Professor Rostovtzeff in his *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*<sup>2</sup>—, that the Roman farmer was a class-conscious peasant, a serf on a large estate, and a sorry contrast to the better-advantaged urbanite of the Roman world. Professor Frank traces the course of Roman agricultural development from the early Republic to the days of the later Empire, emphasizing the social and political importance of the small independent landholder under the Republic and the continuance of numerous small holdings even in imperial times. Until the dark days of the third century it was true, it seems (87), "that in a large part of the hilly country of Italy the valley villages of petty farmers remained fairly safe from the encroachment of latifundia". There were Roman farmers rather than peasants in those better days; for (91), with the old Roman, "agriculture was not only an economic problem, it was also a mode of life".

In his next chapter Professor Frank maintains (92) that the experience of ancient Rome may be adduced as proof of the well-recognized fact that "paternalism often makes more rapid progress under autocracy than under popular rule . . ." In the realms of marriage, organized charity, economic life, government of subject peoples, religion, education, and even literature, a survey of the evidence discloses a progressive trend from an attitude or policy of *laissez faire* in Republican days to one of state regulation and support under the Empire. The thesis is well confirmed. Yet it seems to me that Professor Frank pleads too hard for it when he asserts (101) that the Republic "never interfered with, nor gave state aid to, trade, manufacturing, maritime commerce, or agriculture . . ."<sup>3</sup>. Is there any room in this statement for a recognition of the Lex Claudia of 218 B. C.? That law may have originated as class legislation; but it remained on the records as an important governmental enactment that exerted a powerful check upon the business activities of the senatorial

<sup>2</sup>This book was published at Oxford, England, by the Clarendon Press, in 1926. For a review of it, by Professor Casper J. Kraemer, Jr., see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 22.13-15. C. K. >

<sup>3</sup>Compare also 94: "... Class legislation was prohibited, paternalistic schemes frowned upon, trade was free, Roman seas and ports open to all; individual endeavor was favored and protected from state interference as well as from unduly powerful combinations . . ."

nobility, and it was later re-enacted by an autocrat, Julius Caesar, as a form of state regulation that was still considered valid<sup>4</sup>.

The final essay in the book argues for a new interpretation of the fragments of early Roman law in the light of our improved understanding of the historical background. Ancient historians have changed their conceptions of early Rome more rapidly than have the students of ancient law; the latter, therefore, must be required (125) "to modernize their ideas of what Rome was like in 450 B. C. and to reinterpret their fragments in the light of this new knowledge..." As examples of this reinterpretation Professor Frank discusses at some length the transaction of *mancipium* (125-129), the passage in the Twelve Tables (Tabula V.3) pertaining to wills and legacies (129-133), and the

ceremony of *coemptio* in marriage (133-138); in each case he shows that our understanding of the meaning will change radically as soon as we have rid ourselves of certain false notions which have arisen ultimately from the fundamental misconception that the Twelve Tables belonged to a primitive and backward Rome, a misconception which, Professor Frank maintains (139), a study of "the newer economic and social histories of Rome based upon the results of recent excavations..." should eliminate.

It is the aim of these studies, then, to plead for a new and truer perspective such as is obtainable from a clearer understanding of the facts. From all of them the reader will derive fresh insight into certain aspects of Roman life, and by them he will be stimulated to apply a similar method of inquiry to other phases of his study of the past.

<sup>4</sup>See Tenney Frank, *An Economic History of Rome*, 114-115 (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1927).

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